



CASE STUDY: MANAGING VISITORS AT THE SEYCHELLES

Ecotourism principles for Cousin Island Special Reserve

About 11,000 people visit Cousin Island, Seychelles, each year to see the seabird breeding colonies, the endemic terrestrial birds, a restored coastal forest, and nesting hawksbill turtles. Cousin Island has been recognized through ecotourism awards from British Airways and Conde Nast Traveller. Nature Seychelles (the local management agency) has a tourism policy and a Tourism Code of Practice. The ecotourism operation on Cousin has been aligned to eight principles defined under the International Ecotourism Standard for Certification developed by a partnership comprising the Ecotourism Association of Australia, the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism of Australia, and Green Glove (a program of the World Travel and Tourism Council). The facilities have not been certified, but the aim is to ensure that they ultimately meet ISO 4001 Standards. The principles are:

Natural area focus: The aim of a tour is to see very tame birds and wildlife – a unique experience for visitors.

Guide training: The Wardens are trained as guides and are bilingual (English and French), ensuring visitors increase their appreciation of nature.

Limits on Tourist Numbers and Activities: Guided tours are limited to half days, four days a week; there is no picnicking, overnight accommodation, or taking of specimens or souvenirs; distance is kept from nesting birds and turtles; mooring buoys have been installed; and the reserve uses solar power. Wardens may stop anyone suspected of violating Reserve Regulations.

Direct contribution to conservation: Revenue generated from landing fees (US\$25 for overseas visitors) and sale of T-shirts, drinks and postcards covers most Reserve management costs, some goes to conservation and environmental education.